

Dr. Harry Sherman in Augusta is contemplating retirement due to a lack of adequate Medicare reimbursement and the high cost of liability premiums. And more specifically, I demonstrated the decreasing reimbursement for, and thus the eventual reduction in access to very common procedures provided to Medicare recipients.

I would like to bring the attention of my colleagues to a survey conducted by the American Academy of Family Physicians. This survey is not necessarily scientific, but I believe it is indicative of the problem we are facing. AAFP found that 24 percent of family physicians no longer accept new Medicare patients. After the 4.5 percent cut was announced, AAFP surveyed again to find out what its members would do if the cut takes effect. As detailed in a release from the American Academy of Family Physicians, only 36 percent said they would take new Medicare patients if these new cuts occur.

Mr. Speaker, come January, doctors are going to take a cut in their reimbursement for treating our Nation's most needy individuals. There is an old saying, however, that the night is always darkest just before the dawn. With a physician-reimbursement disaster looming, Congress is on the verge of a breakthrough. Housed within the Medicare modernization bill is temporary relief for the medical community. House and Senate negotiators have announced an agreement that will potentially bring this legislation before the Congress this week. I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the subcommittee chair, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON), and those from the other Chamber, such as Senators FRIST, GRASSLEY, BAUCUS and BREAUX, who have worked so hard to get us to where we are today.

I encourage all of those involved in this process to continue to act in the best interests of the American people, but especially our seniors and the medical community on which they so desperately depend. Let me be clear, as a physician Member of the United States House of Representatives, I believe that we must pass the Medicare conference report now. For nearly 40 years, Medicare has provided necessary health care to millions of patients across this country. Another steep cut in reimbursement rates would have been devastating for the physicians who care for Medicare patients; but with the language that has been crafted, the physician-reimbursement update would be a positive 1.5 percent.

This chart is representative of the positive impact the current Medicare legislation will have on Medicare providers throughout the country. For example, New York will see a benefit of \$865 million; Washington State benefits \$155 million; Texas, \$641 million; and most important to me and my colleagues from Georgia, our State will benefit \$254 million. All 50 States will see a positive impact from the current

version of the Medicare conference report.

I cannot overstate the importance of just this one piece of the overall Medicare bill. It is my hope this will allow for the continued access to quality health care for our seniors. I am proud that as the door was slamming shut on our seniors' health care, this Congress stood up, and will stand up, in a bipartisan fashion and hold this door open.

Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest achievements of the Medicare program is the access to high-quality care it has brought to our Nation's seniors and disabled patients. This level of access is more likely to continue in light of this temporary fix. This legislation will allow Congress and the Center for Medicare Services the time to work together to finally find a more permanent solution by revamping the Medicare payment formula.

Doctors are the linchpin of the Medicare program. Let me say that a prescription drug plan is no benefit at all unless there are physicians willing to accept Medicare patients and to write those prescriptions. We need to pass this conference report and pass it now.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDI). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOFFEL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight with my colleagues to resume the Iraq Watch we have been conducting almost every week on the floor since sometime last spring. I believe it was April that we started speaking every week on the floor about our concerns about our policies in Iraq, trying to ask questions, trying to seek answers from the administration regarding the policies that we have been pursuing. Also, we have been suggesting changes that we would like to see in those policies. Of course, a lot has happened in Iraq since last spring, since the very impressive and brave work of our military men and women, the impressive victory that they won over Saddam Hussein, a victory no one thought was in doubt, but everyone was happy to see with minimal loss of life. We thought that the military performed with great courage and great skill.

Since that time, of course, it has become clear as the military battle was conducted, the planning for and the actual reconstruction and security of Iraq has been very poor. We have all been disappointed in the difficulties. The continuing casualties have been heartbreaking. The inability to get the American-appointed Governing Council to work effectively to try to bring the Iraqi society together has been disappointing. I think the Bush administration finally understands they need to change their plan for the ultimate creation of a new government and a

representative democracy and hopefully a pluralistic society in Iraq.

Recently the administration has announced a change. They will no longer ask that the Governing Council in Iraq be responsible for writing a new constitution and holding new elections before America gives up authority for the reconstruction and the occupation of Iraq.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, we are now putting time limits on our occupation. We have apparently announced that we will give to the Iraqis the responsibility for their reconstruction next summer, although the President has been clear, and I agree with the President that we must continue to keep our forces there to make sure the tyrants and the murderers do not come back if the Iraqi democrats-to-be fail to move forward and secure their country.

The question is what is the best policy for this country? How do we best achieve a stable and secure Iraq, which is a goal all of us share? How do we best achieve the creation of a pluralistic society? How do we best establish a representative government based upon principles of self-government and tolerance and cooperation with the rights of women protected, with sharing of responsibility between the three great ethnic groups in Iraq, the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds? How do we best achieve this in the face of a security threat in Iraq where our troops are not safe, where the guerilla attacks against our troops continue, where there is no Iraqi Army yet ready to step forward to provide for its own security, where the Iraqi police are not yet capable of providing for security domestically? How do we best proceed?

Some fear that the President after holding on to power and not allowing the Iraqi Governing Council or any other group to have any decision-making power, some fear that the President now is moving too quickly to give up power to the Iraqis; and I think it is a very legitimate question because if we leave too early, if we leave a vacuum in any way in Iraq, only bad things can happen, whether Saddam Hussein or his followers attempt to come back, whether a new group of lawless thugs attempt to take over, whether forces from other countries attempt to infiltrate and take over Iraq, none of that would be good. None of that would be good for the Western democracies; none of that would honor the sacrifices that brave young Americans have made, including those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and have died serving their country.

A premature departure from Iraq by this country could lead to a less stable country in Iraq. It could lead to a less stable Middle East. It could allow Iraq to become a haven for terrorists, which is a process, unfortunately, already under way, a haven which did not exist when Saddam Hussein was in power. As murderous a tyrant as he was, he operated in a secular fashion and did not

apparently have relationships with the religious fundamentalists and extremists that form al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. But now with the instability in Iraq, it has become a magnet for those who want to attack Americans and disrupt the search for peace in the Middle East.

It is my view, Mr. Speaker, the way to best achieve our national goals in Iraq is to recognize that while this country is uniquely capable of winning military victories and facing down tyrants and working for the liberation of oppressed people, we are perhaps not best suited for nation-building; that we are probably not using our resources and our skills to our highest potential when we get bogged down in having to administer a country. It is admirable that we are willing to pay for the reconstruction or some of the reconstruction of a nation, and that is a great and wonderful American tradition of rebuilding vanquished foes and those less fortunate. But how do we best achieve this stabilized society, representative government and the creation of a pluralistic society where tolerance and economic freedom and personal liberty can flourish?

I am here tonight to say that I continue to believe that we should turn to our multinational organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and others, to help us with nation-building in Iraq. I would point out that the United Nations is perhaps uniquely qualified through experience and organization to be responsible for reconstruction and nation-building.

In fact, this is what the United Nations was created to do in 1945. I fear that an almost irrational opposition to the notion and the concept of the United Nations from some on the other side of the aisle is preventing this country from calling upon the United Nations to assume this burden. There are many reasons why I would like to see this happen. It is not only to get out from under the financial burden of reconstructing Iraq on our own. It is partly that; it is also partly to share the responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq. It is to share the credibility that is needed, to call upon other nations and multilateral organizations like the United Nations to provide the stability and take away from the equation some of the animosity that has wrongfully built up against America, but nonetheless exists in some part of the world.

□ 2145

Frankly, the United Nations is designed to do this kind of work. It is designed to relieve the United States from taking on all of the burden of reconstructing a country and building a new Nation. If we turn to the United Nations, we will still be the senior partner. We pay 25 percent of the bills of the United Nations. We will still have tremendous influence over what happens, but we would be in a position where the responsibility and account-

ability and the burden of reconstruction would be shared with an organization that is created to do that very thing.

Secondly, I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that anyone, the United States, the United Nations, or anyone else, will have success in the stabilization of Iraq, not the least of which I would include the Iraqi Governing Council itself, unless we establish security in Iraq, and that has not been done. Again, I think it is asking too much of our American military to become a long-term occupying power, to have our young men and women serving in what, in parts of Iraq, seems to be, literally, a shooting gallery, with 20 or 25 daily attacks on American Forces and our Coalition Forces. We are not in a position to have secured Iraq. We clearly need more troops to do that. Yet, in my view, it should not be America's burden to send more troops.

So I would say that it is by far the best strategy to turn to NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is a military organization, to provide security in Iraq. NATO, of course, historically never fired a shot, was designed as a defensive alliance to keep the world safe from any hostility from the Soviet Union. In the conflict in Kosovo, the NATO forces were used for the first time out of the traditional confines of Europe, or at least on the southern stretches of Europe, used for the first time in a proactive way to defeat another tyrant, another dictator, Milosevic, in Kosovo. And NATO performed brilliantly and was able to liberate that country from the abuses of that dictator and has also now moved into Afghanistan to take over some of the security functions in that country. I believe that NATO would be the appropriate international organization to provide security in Iraq while we turn to the United Nations to take primary responsibility for the reconstruction of Iraq.

Now, none of this will happen, Mr. Speaker, none of this will happen until the United States is willing to give up some authority in Iraq. We cannot continue to call all of the shots in Iraq and expect our traditional allies to send troops or money or advice or anything else. It is time for us not just to put Iraqis back in charge, because it is not yet clear Iraqis are able to be back in charge, particularly, with the insecure conditions that exist there; but it is time for us, in concert with our traditional allies, in concert with international organizations that we created at the end of the Second World War, that we established for the very purpose of Nation-building. Nation-building was not a phrase then, it is a newer phrase, but the concept is exactly why NATO was established, and, particularly, why the United Nations was established. It is time for us to use our diplomatic skill to give up the necessary authority and responsibility, to share the obligations with these two international organizations, so that we

can more quickly and more effectively and more safely stabilize Iraq, establish a pluralistic society, and move them towards self-government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), one of the senior members of the House Committee on International Relations and a founding member of Iraq Watch, my good friend.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. It is good to be here with my colleague tonight and share a few observations regarding this situation in Iraq. Also, I think at some point in time, I think it is necessary to present some information to the American people and to those who are listening here tonight relative to what is transpiring in Afghanistan.

I think to sum up what the gentleman said, one only has to look at the cover of the November 3 edition of Newsweek magazine, and it is entitled, "Bush's \$87 Billion Mess. Waste, Chaos, and Cronyism. The Real Cost of Rebuilding Iraq."

It has become a matter of concern, as the gentleman well knows, not only to Members on this side of the aisle, Democrats, but clearly to our colleagues on the Republican side, particularly in the United States Senate, because if there is any term that best characterizes what is occurring, it is chaos.

Mr. Speaker, in our previous efforts in terms of Iraq Watch, we discussed the lack of post-major combat phase planning. And again, that opinion was shared by many, most specifically, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, RICHARD LUGAR who, in fact, had written an article that I thought was very incisive and appeared in the Washington Post. But not only do we not have a plan, but the plan seems to change almost on a daily basis.

If my colleagues remember, I think it was, in fact, a colleague of ours here in the House, a senior Republican Member of the House Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH), highly-regarded and well-respected by all Members, who implored the President to establish, once and for all, who is in charge of whatever plan may or may not exist out there. Initially, Jay Garner, a former general, was dispatched to Iraq to work with Iraqis that were favorably disposed to the United States to begin the process of rebuilding. And, after a relatively short period of time, there was a change there. And L. Paul Bremer became, if you will, the viceroy of Iraq. Mr. Bremer indicated that his boss to whom he reported directly was the Secretary of Defense Mr. Rumsfeld. Yet, several months thereafter, there was an announcement from the White House that in fact it was the National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, who was vested with the responsibility of coordinating the plan for Iraq. Of course, recently we learn that Mr.

Bremer, because of the deteriorating situation in Iraq, either reached out or was summonsed by the White House for a special meeting directly with the President.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that there be one individual that can be held accountable, other than the President, for the shaping of this policy that means so much to the American people with our sons and daughters tragically dying there on an all-too-frequent basis, and to the American taxpayers who were asked by this White House to appropriate some \$87 billion on top of the \$79 billion that we have already spent in Iraq to create security in Iraq and to rebuild Iraq, if you will, to reconstruct Iraq. Many of us on this side of the aisle were adamantly opposed, primarily based on the fact that this money was not in the form of a loan, but was a gift to Iraq, a nation with incredible resources, some of the largest reserves in terms of energy anywhere in the world, second only to Saudi Arabia. And hopefully, at some time in the not-too-distant future, would clearly be able to repay the American taxpayers for the sacrifices that they are making now while we are dealing with these burgeoning deficits that will at some point in time be a severe drag on our economy.

But not only do we have a confusion in terms of who is in charge, but we have had a series of different plans. It would appear now that the most recent plan is what I would describe as the French plan, the plan that France suggested would be the most fruitful initiative in terms of bringing stability and rebuilding Iraq. I find that rather ironic, given our recent rather divisive relationship with France.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman refers to the latest plan as the French plan. The New York Times on Sunday, in looking at the plan that they characterize as throwing the problem to the Iraqis, called it the "hot potato plan." French, hot potato french fries perhaps, whatever.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, maybe this was a hot french fries plan; I honestly do not know.

I notice we have been joined by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), our friend, who is also a member of our Iraq Watch group. But I think what is difficult to accept is that what we have now achieved is the expenditure of billions of dollars of American taxpayers' money. Of course, the White House made note of the fact that there were other international donors in a conference in Madrid. But what I thought was particularly noticeable in Madrid was that not a single donor there, with the exception of the Japanese, provided gifts, outright grants like this institution did and like this White House did, but no, they decided they would loan the money so that their people would be repaid rather than our people who are carrying the entire burden.

But here we are, we have suffered, and let us be very candid and frank: We

have suffered a loss of prestige all over the world. One only has to turn to nightly news shows. Leading the news now are the preparations in Great Britain for the visit of our President, President Bush who, according to the most recent polls is viewed negatively by our ally, the English people, by 60 percent. Sixty percent of the English people disapprove of President Bush. Whether one is a Democrat or whether one is a Republican, that is painful to us. That is painful to us. We do not wish our President to be viewed as negative by our ally. And recently during the course of a hearing on the Subcommittee on Latin America, data was put forward that 87 percent of our neighbors here in this hemisphere disapprove of our President. Again, that pains us all.

□ 2200

That pains us all.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, may I interrupt the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) again?

There was additional polling information made available over the weekend from a European pollster, I do not know the name, saying that a majority of citizens in virtually every European country except, I believe, Italy, view the United States as the most likely country to start a war or to create instability. Now, I reject that view completely. We are the peacemakers and we are not the war makers; but I wanted to emphasize the gentleman's point that something has gone wrong with the way we are viewed by our friends around the world, let alone how we are viewed by our enemies. I am not so concerned about how the enemies look at us, but when the Western European democracies have a negative view of our President and our country, a negative view that I do not share, but that they have come to that conclusion, something is dramatically wrong.

Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) mind if we bring our colleague into the conversation?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would welcome our friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, it is good to be with you this evening. I was asked a few days ago by a reporter in my district why the emphasis on what has gone wrong in Iraq. The question was phrased in this way: Should you not be concerned about the future and what we do next? And my response was this: The same people who are in charge of planning for the future are the people who have gotten us to the point where we are now. And unless we look at how we got into this situation, unless we scrutinize the decision-makers who brought us to this point, we cannot have confidence that we are being taken in the right direction as far as the future is concerned.

If I could just say a word about the \$87 billion that my friend referred to earlier. I think the American people

need to know that if we were to take the 435 congressional districts in this country, and we were to divide \$87 billion by the 435 congressional districts, what we would come out with is \$200 million that could be spent in every congressional district in this country for the needs that exist back home, for the jobless people, for the children who do not have health care, for the older people who do not have prescription drugs.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And, Mr. Speaker, for our veterans.

Mr. STRICKLAND. For our veterans. And that leads me to the fact that we are underfunding veterans health care by \$1.8 billion. \$1.8 billion. We are sending \$87 billion to Iraq in addition to what we have already spent this year, and we are being so stingy with our veterans that we are underfunding their health care by \$1.8 billion.

And the American people need to know that over in the Senate they passed an amendment to add an additional \$1.3 billion of that \$1.8 billion shortfall. And the very day that amendment passed the Senate, the White House put out a statement opposing it. Now, think of that. Here we have a President, we have a President who has asked for \$87 billion for Iraq and takes active opposition toward the efforts in this Congress to give an additional \$1.8 billion to our veterans. I mean, I think that is shocking; I think it is something the American people would object to. And they need to know about that.

But I want to talk about one other thing, if I can, in regard to this war effort, and it is something that I have talked about and I think others have talked about on this floor before. But it is something that the American people need to know about. As our soldiers continue to die on a daily basis in Iraq, I think Americans have a right to ask for answers from the President, from our Secretary of Defense, from the Pentagon: Why do all of our troops who are fighting for us this very moment in Iraq not have the best protective armor available? When will this armor be available to all of our soldiers? Why were soldiers sent into battle with these cheap, Vietnam-era flak jackets that are not capable of stopping bullets?

I have asked the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, to provide answers as to how many American soldiers have been killed or have been seriously wounded in part because they were not adequately protected. And I have asked the Secretary to commit that we will not provide this protection to foreign troops until every, every American soldier in harm's way is so protected.

Somebody needs to be held accountable for this. We had months to prepare for this war, months during which we knew we were likely to be sending young Americans into harm's way. And yet we did so without giving them this protection. Somebody ought to be held

responsible. Either the President or Secretary Rumsfeld or some lower-level individual apparently made the decision that this was not a priority. And I believe American soldiers have lost their lives because of this failure to plan, failure to set appropriate priorities. And who is going to be helped accountable, and when is the situation going to be altered?

Americans need to know that as we sit in our homes and watch TV, and those of us who work in this Chamber are here, we carry out our daily lives, that there are young Americans over there in tanks and in Humvees and walking patrols that do not have the most basic protection, this body armor that is capable of stopping bullets. Why do they not have that protection?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) yield for just a moment.

I met with families of Reservists and National Guard, military that are serving in Iraq currently. They have been trained as a transportation unit. They are now serving in a different role that exposes them to great danger. They are using their own equipment, trucks that have no armor protection, that are open, that leave these men and women on the back of what I would call a large pickup vehicle as a sitting target. These families were outraged. One actually had to go to a military hardware store, presumably, to purchase for their son a \$900 kevlar suit because the parents simply could not sleep at night. And it cost that family \$400 to send it via the United States Post Office.

Mr. STRICKLAND. General Myers and others have been widely quoted in the press as saying this is not a money problem; it is a supply problem. Well, it is a supply problem because this war was under way for almost 7 months before the first request came to this Congress for resources to provide this protection. But even beyond that, I got a call in my office, week before last, from a company that told me they had 30,000 of these plates in stock, plates that meet specifications. Because they say they also provide them to our Army Rangers.

I do not know how those responsible can sleep at night. They ought to stay up until they solve this problem.

I just met with a young soldier back in my district who was wounded by shrapnel. He told me that he sees no way that this Pentagon commitment to have these vests delivered to all of our troops by December is going to be possible. He says there are thousands of troops over there without this most basic protection.

Now, how can we trust these people to tell us what is the best course of action for the future of this war in Iraq when they have been so incompetent and negligent in providing our troops with this most basic protection?

Mr. DELAHUNT. And yet, Mr. Speaker, they would criticize those who ask those questions and instead put forth,

if you will, a PR campaign to say what is right in Iraq. But it is time, I believe, to listen to the troops who give us insight. We all know, for example, because we travel abroad and often-times we visit our troops, that these trips are very carefully structured so that only those things the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense wants us to hear is provided us.

If I could just indulge my two friends for a moment. Back in mid-October there was a report in The Washington Post and it is entitled, "Many Troops Dissatisfied, Iraq Poll Finds." A broad survey of U.S. troops in Iraq found that half of those questioned described their unit's morale as low and their training as insufficient and said they do not plan to reenlist. Now, this was not a poll conducted by The Washington Post or the New York Times, or the Los Angeles Times or the Boston Globe. It was a poll that was conducted by the Stars and Stripes newspaper, a newspaper funded by our Pentagon, our Department of Defense.

The findings, if I can just go on, the findings drawn from 1,900 questionnaires presented to U.S. servicemembers throughout Iraq conflict with statements by military commanders and Bush administration officials that portray the deployed troops as highly spirited and generally well prepared. Though not obtained through scientific methods, the survey results indicate that prolonged tours in Iraq are wearing down a significant portion of the U.S. force and threatening to provoke a sizable exodus from military service. And yet the paper quotes General Sanchez, commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq, saying in a September 9 interview for this particular series, "There is no moral problem."

Of course, as we know, the Bush administration has launched this campaign. But the Stars and Stripes, the military's paper, raised questions about what visiting dignitaries, such as us and our other colleagues who have visited Iraq, get to see. Let me quote again from the Stars and Stripes: "Many soldiers, including several officers, allege that VIP visits from the Pentagon and Capitol Hill are only given hand-picked troops to meet with during their tours of Iraq," the newspaper said in its interview with General Sanchez.

The phrase "dog and pony show" is usually used. Some troops even go so far as to say they have been ordered not to talk to VIPs because leaders are afraid of what they might say.

Let me say it is about time for the unvarnished truth to be presented to the American people. And that is what we attempt to do during the course of this hour, of which we have had many.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if I could just say a word about the troops. I spent some time last weekend with two young soldiers from my district, both of whom have been wounded, and they have come back for medical treatment. They are good, loyal, patriotic

soldiers. They are going to do their duty. They care about Iraq. They care about the Iraqi people. They care about the final outcome in that country. The problem is not with our troops. These are wonderful young Americans who are simply doing what they are called upon to do. And they are doing it well.

The problem, as I see it, exists with the decision-makers, those who sit here in the safety of the offices in Washington D.C. and elsewhere and make decisions which affect real lives. I had breakfast in a restaurant in Ohio a couple of weekends ago. As I was finishing my breakfast, I struck up a conversation with a young woman sitting in a booth next to me. She was leaving Ohio as soon as she finished her breakfast and driving to Baltimore to meet her husband, who is stationed in Africa and who is coming home, who is coming home for a 2-week leave. And then she told me that she had just gotten her orders and she is being deployed to Iraq. The children are going to be taken care of by the grandparents.

□ 2215

I just share that with you to emphasize the fact that we are talking about real people, real mothers and dads, real sweethearts, real sons and daughters. These are real Americans, and decisions are being made to expose them to the most incredible danger.

The question is, is this war being pursued in a way that is rationale and reasonable? I still wish that this President, this administration would go to the world community, would seek out the help that we need, would internationalize the effort in Iraq, would stop our soldiers being the only targets basically.

We hear talk about a coalition. Let us face it. There are a handful basically of coalition forces in Iraq. Most of the young people there are being killed and injured and shot at are American troops; and we need to internationalize our effort, spread this responsibility and not just simply allow our kids, our children for the next, no one knows for sure. The most recent estimate I have heard is that at least for 5 years our troops are likely to be there, and I just do not think the American people want this to continue as it is unfolding before our eyes. Every day we see it happening.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman. The problem is not with our troops. It is with the policymakers and our planners here in Washington.

I referred earlier to the New York Times article this Sunday. They entitled it "Iraq Goes Sour." And I take issue, actually, with one of the claims they make here. They blame the intelligence agencies for the failures to understand what was actually happening in Iraq. The editorial said, for example, the Central Intelligence Agency we now realize had no idea what was going on inside Iraq. They continue, the CIA's estimate regarding weapons of

mass destruction were basically worst-case scenarios of what the Hussein regime might have been up to in the interim, in 1998 when inspections were cut off.

They continue, that was apparently a mistake, if an understandable one. The reality I think is different. I think that while the intelligence agencies clearly did not get it right, they were telling the policymakers last fall before Congress voted on whether or not to authorize the war, they were telling the White House that there was great uncertainty about what Hussein had and what he did not have. We know that now. We did not know it then.

This past Spring, 6 months after we voted, and after the war was fought and won, at least according to the President's proclamation on May 1, at least the military's battle was won, if not the guerilla battle. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence made available to rank and file members 18 or 20 boxes of intelligence information, most notably the Defense Intelligence Agency report of September 2002. And then the great summary report the national intelligence estimate of October of 2002. And I have read the executive summaries of those documents. It is very long, and I spent a couple of hours reading it. It would take days to read all of those boxes, but those summaries which are still classified are replete with uncertainties, with the agencies saying, well, we believe he has got this. We believe he has got that but we are not sure. He had this amount of weapons in the past and we are not quite sure where they are today.

They have made the case, as the Vice President has said, that Hussein was trying to do certain things, but they were full of uncertainty. And my objection is none of that uncertainty was communicated to Congress and to the American people. The President and all of his people, and I want to give an example in a second, told us with complete clarity and certainty that Hussein had these weapons. We knew where they were. We knew how much they weighed. We knew everything about them. We were going to get them and we could not trust him for another moment. And it is my view that it is not the intelligence agencies that failed, but the politicians.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I cannot agree more. Ironically, in this week's edition of Newsweek magazine, there is an article that I would commend to all of our colleagues here in the House and to the viewing audience here tonight. This is very important to read. As one can see, there is a picture of the Vice President on the cover. It is entitled, "How Dick Cheney Sold the War. Why He Fell for Bad Intelligence and Pitched It to the President."

The Central Intelligence Agency, I daresay, made a solid effort from what

information now appears to be back in the public domain. I think it is safe to conclude that key players led by the Vice President, supported by Secretary Rumsfeld, and Under Secretary Wolfowitz, and Under Secretary Fife, cherry-picked, if you will, those pieces of information that buttress their case and made unequivocal statement to the American people.

It is very fascinating when the American people and the United States Congress learn that there is a special covert group within the Department of Defense. And this is within the civilian leadership, called the Office for Special Plans that was running a parallel operation in terms of intelligence analysis. It was that group that was doing the cherry-picking. It was that group that got us into this war. They made unequivocal statements, like Secretary Rumsfeld, that those weapons of mass destruction, we know where they are. They are in Tikrit, in the west here and in the east here. And, of course, we have discovered after expending close to a billion dollars to just simply looking for them that they do not exist, much to our embarrassment and again our loss of prestige.

So I think it is important that those who attack the CIA often do it in a way that I think reveals their own political agenda. Again, demeaning the professionalism of the men and women that serve in the CIA is not the way to have a constructive debate about what we ought to occur, what we ought to be doing right now.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I would just concur with the gentleman that that is a very interesting Newsweek article. I read it a few hours ago. It is very disturbing because it does lay out how under the Vice President's leadership, this Office of Special Plans collected their own information and drew their own conclusions, and then they use those conclusions to encourage the kind of action that occurred.

Now, the fact is that the President has finally admitted quite publicly, in spite of the Vice President's statement to the contrary, that there is no evidence that Iraq or Saddam Hussein was responsible for the attack upon our Nation on September 11, 2001. That is a very critical conclusion, I think, for us to have come to. Because given that and given the fact that we had weapons inspectors in Iraq and they were asking for more time, would not you think that if there is uncertainty about exactly what Saddam Hussein has or may have, that there is no evidence that he was involved in the direct attack upon our country, that we would have approached this situation a little more cautiously, a little more thoughtfully, that we would have expended the time that the inspectors were asking for.

If we had done that, it may have been possible. It may have been possible.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Again, this is a situation that is continuing today where a conclusion or an opinion or a pre-disposed policy is searching for facts.

Talking about the CIA, what prompted Paul Bremer to come to Washington, DC, was a new top secret CIA report from Iraq that growing numbers of Iraqis are concluding that the U.S.-led coalition can be defeated and a supporting the insurgents.

Again, I am quoting from a newspaper report, "The report paints a bleak picture of the political and security situation in Iraq and cautions that the U.S.-led drive to rebuild a country as a democracy could collapse."

The report's bleak tone and Bremer's private endorsement differ sharply with the upbeat public assessments that President Bush, his chief aids, and even Bremer are giving as part of an aggressive publicity campaign aimed at countering rising anxieties over increasing U.S. casualties in Iraq. Let us be honest with the American people. Remember in Vietnam what, I daresay, forced Lyndon Johnson to reassess his plans for reelection, was the fact that there was such a great divergence and disparity between the reality that was being presented to the American people and the reality on the ground.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, let me introduce our colleague who has been waiting patiently. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT).

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for putting this special order together.

I think that it is very clear we now know that they wanted to go to war immediately after 9/11 in Iraq. They went to Afghanistan really because that was more obvious to people at that point, but they were clearly planning for a long time and they simply misled us about what was there.

Everybody understands that now. There is no mystery in this country or anywhere else in the world. The question is, What are we going to do now?

I picked up the Sunday morning newspaper and last Thursday I came back to Washington, DC and went out to MCI Center to a hockey game with a bunch of amputees from Walter Reed. The next day I went up there and walked through several of the wards. There are two pictures of the front page of young men who have been severely injured that I know. I have met them. These are young kids who did what their country asked them, and we honored them.

I told them I was there because I wanted to say thank you. But the fact is that that is exactly what happened in Vietnam. Young people went and died doing exactly what they were asked to do. It is the leadership that ought to have to pay the price and they ought to start paying it right now.

We have a President who simply will not get off the fact that he made a mistake. He simply went the wrong place. He should never have stopped the war on terror. He should have finished what was going on in Afghanistan and then perhaps you look later at something, but Afghanistan is as bad or worse than it was when we went in there.

We still have people dying there. One died yesterday from the State of Washington. And we continued to allow our young people, men and women, now to be killed in a war that makes no sense in the way it is being run. And the President will not admit it. The whole world has told him that. They told him on the 25th of February, ten million people marched in the streets this in this country. The President said, It is just a focus group. We are going to war.

Now, my belief is that we have to figure out how we get out and how we, with honor, get out of this thing. It is going to be very difficult to do that.

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When they called Bremer back here in the other day, it was simply because they said, gee, it is 1 year to the election. How in the heck are we going to explain this mess at election time? We have got to end it. So we are now, in every decision that will be made, it will be made not about what is good for our troops or what is good for the Reservists or the Guard people or anybody else, but what is seen to be good for the President's reelection campaign.

I am afraid that unless the Congress raises some noise about this, we are going to see more people sacrificed in this process because they will not get the international community in. If the President would say tomorrow, I want Kofi Annan to take over the reconstruction and Kofi Annan to take over the military peacekeeping in the country, we will make a contribution as we have but we are not going to run it, things would begin to change dramatically.

This is viewed as an occupation. The actual choice of where do they go with their headquarters when they came into Baghdad, they went to the palaces that Saddam Hussein had built and they moved in, and they said to the people, this is where we belong; we are running the place. No Iraqi missed the message.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, if the good doctor will allow me to interject a thought here, the President tries to set this up as a two choice paradigm. We either do exactly what we are doing now or, as he says, we cut and run, as if there are no other options, but the gentleman is describing a third option. There may be a fourth or a fifth option. We ought to be looking at the situation, not just simply blindly pursuing a course of action that is resulting in more and more death.

Quite frankly, I resent it when the President refers to those of us who question his policies as those who want to cut and run. The last thing I want to do in Iraq is cut and run. We cannot cut and run, and I know not a single Democrat who is suggesting that course of action, but that does not mean that we endorse his plan because his plan is getting us deeper and deeper and deeper into a quagmire. More and more young Americans are being

killed, and even more are being seriously wounded. We cannot allow this situation to continue.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. The hardest part about this is that the American people are not being told the truth. If we read the American newspapers, they are told there are only 5,000 in al Qaeda over in Iraq. If we read the European papers, they say 50,000. We do not see any bodies coming back. They have absolutely prohibited the press and the media from going out to Dover when the troops come back or to go to cemeteries when people are being buried. They are simply blinding the American people's eyes. In my view, the American people have to demand that they know what is going on, and I think there is really no excuse for what they have done except that they have to make the political campaign look better.

This is a mess. Everywhere in the world we look at the press, any country in the world we see the press. They have all analyzed the President made a big mistake. The French, in fact, were right. If people really want to understand what is going on here, go watch the movie *The Battle of Algiers*. The French went through exactly the same thing in Algeria. There has not been a country in the 20th century that invaded a sovereign country and came out whole. Everybody loses.

Whether we are talking about Vietnam or we are talking about Algeria or we are talking about Lebanon or we are talking about any of those countries, the people who invaded always back out with their tail between their legs, and that is where we are today. Those kids, we have still got them out on the line; hold on, kid; keep fighting; try and save yourself. The people behind them are making bad decisions, again and again and again. It is a terrifying thing, and I think the American people cannot let them be blinded from it. They have to begin to demand that they see what the truth is.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments.

I believe our hour is up. I thank all of my colleagues for taking part in Iraq Watch tonight, and we will be back next week.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TANCREDI). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5401. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting as required by Executive Order 13313 of July 31,

2003, a 6-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran that was declared in Executive Order 12170 of November 14, 1979, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c) 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); to the Committee on International Relations.

5402. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting a supplemental report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo; (H. Doc. No. 108—142); to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed.

5403. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Report for 2002 on IAEA Activities in Countries Described in Section 307 (a) of the Foreign Assistance Act, pursuant to Public Law 105—277, section 2809(c)(2); to the Committee on International Relations.

5404. A letter from the Director, Office of Human Resources Management, Department of Energy, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

5405. A letter from the Chairman, Postal Rate Commission, transmitting a report submitted in accordance with the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. app. (Insp. Gen. Act) section 5(b); to the Committee on Government Reform.

5406. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting As required by Section 417(b) of the USA Patriot Act of 2001 (as enacted in Public Law 107-56), the second annual report on the status of the implementation of machine-readable passports (MRPs) in countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

5407. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Department of the Army, transmitting a Feasibility Study and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on the Port of Los Angeles Channel Deepening Project; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5408. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Safety Zone; Lower Mississippi River, Miles 94.0 to 96.0, Above Head of Passes, New Orleans, LA [COTP New Orleans-03-003] (RIN: 2115 — AA97) received November 5, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5409. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zone; Arlington Channel Turning Basin, Mobile, AL [COTP Mobile-03-010] (RIN: 1625 — AA00) received November 5, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5410. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Security Zones; Lower Mississippi River, Above Head of Passes, LA [COTP New Orleans — 03-007] (RIN: 1625 — AA-00) received November 5, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

5411. A letter from the Chief, Regulations and Administrative Law, USCG, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Safety Zone; Port Arthur Ship Canal, Port Arthur, TX [COTP Port Arthur-03-008] (RIN: 1625-AA00) received November 5, 2003, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.